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ABSTRACT

Analysis of data indicates that there are no statistically significant personality variable differences between (1) proctor candidates versus all the students who did not apply and (2) between students selected to be proctors compared to those not selected. Academic variables seem to be the determining factor in both application and selection. But both academic and personality factors are positively related to proctor success, based on the use of average gain quotient as the effectiveness criterion. Flexibility, a sense of personal adequacy, the ability to cope with test-taking anxiety, and comfortableness in interactions with peers of both sexes seem to be useful criteria in the selection of proctors. (MB)

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Proctor Personality Characteristics and Effectiveness in a PSI Course

The effectiveness of the Personalized System of Instruction (PSI) as compared with the traditional lecture format has been demonstrated many times (Green, 1971; Koen, 1971; Kulik, 1974; Goldwater & Acker, 1975). Consequently, recent investigations of the PSI process have concentrated on various components of the process in an attempt to isolate the contributions of each component to the effectiveness of the process. One such component is the use of proctors. In just about every PSI course, proctors of one type or another are used. Some proctors are chosen "internally" from the students currently taking the course. Other proctors are chosen "externally" from either students who have previously taken the course or who are a graduate student or undergraduate major in the course area. However, more than 80% of all PSI courses presently offered tend to use "external" proctors (PSI Newsletter, June, 1974). The selection of these "external" proctors, therefore, is a major consideration for many PSI courses.

While there are many papers that discuss how proctors are selected, the most common factors considered in selecting proctors are: (1) previous performance in the course, or some demonstration of content mastery, (2) interest in being a proctor, and (3) above average "maturity." In some cases preselection performance doing the behaviors expected of a proctor are used (Semb, 1974). In addition, there are studies that examined different proctor systems and characteristics as related to student performance (Johnson & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1974; Calhoun, 1974). But in most papers that examined proctor characteristics as related to student performance and preference the characteristics are demographic and academic in nature (e.g. sex, major, grade average, etc.)

No study to date however, has extensively looked at proctor personality characteristics as related to proctor effectiveness. Yet, most teachers at any level of education are aware that the personality characteristics of the teacher and the student are often instrumental factors in the effectiveness of the learning endeavor. There are educational theorists who suggest that teachers and students be matched in terms of the teacher's ability to generate the appropriate learning environment for a particular student or group of students (Hunt, 1966). Consequently, since proctors in a PSI course assume some of the traditional roles of teachers (testing, diagnosis, recommending, etc.), knowing something about the motivations and needs of both students and proctors may be potentially useful to insure maximum student performance and proctor effectiveness.

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The present paper, therefore, will be the report of a study investigating proctor characteristics, especially personality characteristics, as related to proctor effectiveness. The paper will be concerned with three questions: (1) how are the persons who apply to be proctors different than those who do not, (2) how are students selected to be proctors different than candidates who are not selected, and (3) how are proctor characteristics related to proctor effectiveness.

The subjects were the 520 introductory psychology students and 110 proctor candidates at Le Moyne College during the Spring 1975, Fall 1975, and Spring 1976 semesters. All students took a PSI type introductory psychology course using materials designed for this purpose. Each student was assigned a student proctor (9:1 ratio). The proctor gave, scored, and evaluated the unit tests for each student assigned to the proctor.

To qualify as a proctor candidate the student only needed to have satisfactorily completed the course. The applicant had to submit a proctor application that included: (1) demographic and academic information, (2) reasons for wanting to be a proctor, (3) the names at at least two members of the college staff from whom oral recommendations could be gotten, (4) a recommendation from their own proctor when they took the course, and (5) take a series of personality scales. The proctors were notified that the personality scales would not be used in the selection of proctors, but were essential to study the relationship between proctor characteristics and proctor effectiveness.

The personality scales were:

(1) the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desireability Scale (MC-SD);

(2) Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E);

(3) the Spielberger Anxiety-Trait Scale (STAI-X2);

(4) the Suinn Test Anxiety Behavior Scale (STABS);

(5) the Henneberry Course Anxiety Behavior Scale (CABS);

(6) the Edwards' Personal Preference Scales (EPPI).

Except for the Edwards' Personal Preference Scales, scores for all the scales were available for all the students and proctors. However, a random sample of students, also, were given the E.P.P.S.

An analysis of the data used to compare proctor candidates versus all the students who did not apply indicated that there were no statistically significant personality variable differences between these two groups. However, there were significant academic variable differences. The proctor candidates finished the PSI course earlier (70% versus 63%), and had significantly higher grade point averages (3.24/4.00 versus 2.75/4.00), posttest scores (89.5% versus 81.6%), grades in the course (B versus B+), and average Gain Quotients (.82 versus .73).[1]

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[1] McGuigan, F. J. Amount learned: An empirical basis for grading teachers and students. Teaching of Psychology, 1974, 1, 10-16.

When the students selected to be proctors were compared to the students not selected, there also were no significant personality differences. In terms of the academic variables both groups tended to finish the PSI course early (70% versus 71%). However, the students selected as proctors had significantly higher grade point averages (3.39 versus 2.95), posttest scores (91.4% versus 85.8%), grades in the course (3.80/4.00 versus 3.34/4.00), and average Gain Quotients (.85 versus .76).

In addition, proctor effectiveness was studied using two criteria, namely the average Gain Quotient achieved by the proctor's students and the average overall rating given to each proctor by his or her students on a proctor evaluation scale. Thus, each proctor was evaluated from the perspective of the staff (level of performance) and from the student's perspective of the proctor.

As may be seen in Table 1, Average Gain Quotient correlated significantly with proctor grade point average, student grade point average, the number of days the student took to finish all the units, the order, abasement and heterosexual subscales of the E.P.P.I., and the Suinn Test Anxiety Behavior Scale. In contrast, overall student ratings of the proctor correlated significantly with the exhibition, dominance, and abasement subscales of the E.P.P.I., and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desireability Scale.

The results seemed to indicate that academic variables, rather than personality variables, were the primary differences between the students who applied to be proctors and those who did not and between the students selected as proctors and those who were not. The presence of these academic differences was not surprising. The psychology staff rarely selected a proctor who had less than a 'B' grade in the PSI course. Also, it was evident from student feedback that many students thought that a high grade in the PSI course was necessary to be a proctor. But, the absence of any personality variable differences was unexpected. The staff was looking for students who were responsible, above average in maturity, and capable of the peer interactions involved in being a proctor. Consequently, differences in such personality variables as need for approval, test anxiety, achievement, affliation, dominance, abasement, nurturance, change, etc., were anticipated.

But, while there were no personality variable differences among non-applicants, non-selected applicants, and selected proctors, academic and personality variables were correlated with proctor effectiveness. When average Gain Quotient was used as the effectiveness criterion, the grade the proctor received in the PSI course was not related to effectiveness. But, there was a significant negative correlation between the proctor's grade point average and average student Gain Quotient. This finding, in conjunction with the high positive correlation between student grade point average and average Gain Quotient might indicate that an exceptionally high overall academic record and grade in the PSI course was not necessarily needed to be an effective proctor in the PSI course.

The significant negative correlations involving average Gain Quotient and the personality factors of order, abasement, and test anxiety seemed to indicate that flexibility, a sense of personal adequacy, and the ability to cope with test taking anxiety might be traits of effective proctors in a PSI course. In addition, the positive correlation between Gain Quotient and heterosexuality strongly indicated that proctors who were more comfortable in interactions with members of the opposite sex were more effective proctors.

As a result, in addition to any academic variables, those selecting proctors also may need to consider: (1) if a proctor who is somewhat flexible will be more effective than one who is too rigid and incapable of adapting when change is appropriate, (2) if a proctor who has a sense of adequacy who does not avoid conflicts and who is not intimidated by peers will be more effective than a proctor who continually acquiesces or feels uneasy when differences of opinion or roles create conflicts with a peer, (3) if a proctor who is less anxious about tests is better able to function in a test giving situation with test anxious students than a proctor who is anxious about tests and who may transmit this anxiety to the test giving situation, and (4) if the proctor who is more comfortable interacting with members of the opposite sex will be a more effective proctor for students of the opposite sex than a proctor who is less at ease in such situations. All these factors could be assessed in at least three ways by using structured tests such as the E.P.P.I., or by role play situations, or by structured interviews with the proctor candidates. But, whether one means of assessment is more valid than another still needs to be determined.

When student ratings of the proctors were used as the effectiveness criterion, a different proctor profile emerged. The students seemed to prefer proctors: (1) who did not try to make themselves self-important (exhibition), (2) who did not try to pressure and direct the student (dominance), (3) who were higher in need for approval and acceptance (MC-SDS), and (4) who avoided conflicts and arguments (abasement). There were no significant correlations between student ratings and any of the academic variables, particularly average student Gain Quotient. Apparently the students rated their proctors independent of the students' performance in the course.

In conclusion, flexibility, self-assurance and comfortableness in interactions with peers of both sexes may be useful criteria when selecting proctors for a PSI course. However, whether or not these personality variables are related to academic ability is not presently clear. A flexible, self-assured, heterosexual proctor who did below average work in the PSI course, may or may not be a good proctor for the same course. Further studies are needed to determine whether proctor personality and academic variables interact to determine proctor effectiveness. Finally, when evaluating proctor effectiveness, primary emphasis should probably be placed upon the performance of the proctor's students rather than the student ratings of the proctor.

Table 1

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Using

Average Student Gain Quotients and Average

Student Ratings of Proctors

Variables	Gain Quotient	Student Ratings
Proctor grade point average	- .31*	.22
Proctor grade in PSI course	- .16	.17
Number of days to finish	- .34*	.13
Student grade point average	- .49**	- .29
E.P.P.I.:		
Achievement	- .04	- .24
Deference	.02	.17
Order	- .41**	.16
Exhibition	.21	- .32*
Autonomy	- .01	- .21
Affliation	.09	.21
Intraception	- .12	.14
Succorance	.01	.07
Dominance	.07	- .36*
Abasement	- .30*	.42**
Nurturance	.07	.05
Change	.10	.04
Endurance	- .17	.09
Heterosexuality	.35*	- .08
Aggression	.22	- .22
Consistency	.14	- .17
CABS	- .20	.29
STABS	- .34*	.11
MC-SDS	- .18	.32*
I-E	- .18	.09
STAI-X2	- .12	.19

* $P < .05$
** $P < .01$